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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH RECENTLY HARASSED
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

REF: NDJAMENA 410

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AMB MEETS HR ACTIVISTS

¶1. (U) Ambassador and POLOFF met October 30 with two human rights activists whose harassment by unknown men last week made the local press. The two men, Massalabaye Tenebaye, President of the Chadian Human Rights League, and Michel Barka, President of the main labor confederation, the Chadian Labor Union Federation (UST), are well known to the Embassy. The meeting was at our request.

TENEBAYE'S AND
BARKA'S HARASSMENT

¶2. (SBU) Tenebaye and Barka recounted their experiences of being followed en route to their homes by strangers who threatened them in various ways but did no actual harm to them. The men reported their experiences to the police, who promised to take appropriate action. Neither Barka nor Tenebaye, however, could cite any police action taken in their behalf. Both reported that although the harassment was a matter of discreet events that had not recurred since, the effect of their experience was to increase their personal sense of insecurity.

SEEKING A MOTIVE

¶3. (SBU) Tenebaye and Barka speculated on the reasons behind their harassment. One possibility was GoC operatives acting under orders to try to discourage their advocacy and political involvement. Another possibility was rogue GoC operatives free-lancing, but with the same general goal. A third possibility was GOC operatives trying to make it seem

as though "the rebels" had threatened the two men. Finally, they speculated that common criminality was a possibility, although they discounted this last motive. Meanwhile, they reported, the GOC's spokesman had made public comments that the activists were responsible for the threats in an effort to drum up international support and dollars for the causes of human and workers' rights.

USG CONCERNS

¶4. (SBU) The two men thanked the Ambassador for reaching out to them and assured him that their visit to the U.S. Embassy would not place them in any danger, including from those that sought to threaten them last week. The Ambassador reiterated his offer to meet with them whenever they had issues they wanted to discuss regarding human rights and good governance in Chad, and offered to meet them publicly whenever they thought that such a meeting would advance their agendas or give their colleagues confidence in USG support for their activities. The two men informed us that the French Ambassador had called them in to discuss their harassment. The Ambassador said that he would consult with his French colleague and others in the diplomatic community on possible further steps in their regard.

ANOTHER INCIDENT

¶5. (SBU) A criminal assault against another prominent member of civil society was attempted last week. The Director of the private radio station "Radio Rainbow" was mugged at gun point near his home, but managed to escape to a friend's

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house. Police responded by arresting the suspect, a member of the Chadian military, who lives in the same neighborhood.

COMMENT

¶6. (U) This kind of harassment of human rights activists and civil society leaders is unfortunately far too common here. Common criminality as a motive for these incidents is a possibility, but we consider that political motives, however murky, are a better explanation. In any case, we are looking at ways to demonstrate to the GOC that it is the duty and responsibility of good governments to protect the human rights of all its citizens, including opponents of the government -- indeed, especially peaceful political opponents. We are planning to spend more quality time with Chadian activists, civil society leaders, and journalists, both to maintain our dialogue with them and demonstrate publicly our solidarity with them. END COMMENT.

¶7. (U) Minimize considered.
NIGRO